

Review Article

# Conceptual Synthesis of Teachers' Etiquette (At-Tibyan) and The Four Pillars of Professional Teacher Competency: A Systematic Literature Review

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**Abstract:** Islamic education in this era of disruption faces a double challenge: the demand for complex professional competencies and the moral degradation of students. Law No. 14 of 2005 has established four pillars of teacher competency, but this framework is often interpreted administratively and has not touched on the deeper ethical-spiritual foundations. This study aims to revitalize the concept of teacher competency by synthesizing the values of *adab mu'allim* from the book *At-Tibyan* by Imam An-Nawawi into modern teacher competency standards. This study uses a qualitative method with a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) approach. Data were collected through documentation of classical texts and indexed journal articles (2015-2025), then analyzed using the interactive model of Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña. The results show a strong overlap between the values of *At-Tibyan* and the Teacher and Lecturer Law. Personal Competence is strengthened by sincerity and *muraqabah*; Social Competence is deepened by *rifq* (gentleness); and Professional Competence is perfected by the concepts of *itqan* (validation of the chain of transmission of knowledge) and *hirsbu* (fighting spirit). This integration offers a "Complete Teacher" paradigm who is not only technically professional but also has spiritual authority in shaping students' character in the digital age.

**Keywords:** At-Tibyan; Competencies; Islamic Education; Law No. 14 of 2005; Teacher Etiquette.

## 1. Introduction

Islamic education today faces two major challenges that are increasingly visible in classroom practice. On one hand, Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teachers are demanded to adapt and master increasingly complex competencies, including digital literacy and student-centered pedagogical paradigms (Arif et al., 2025; Rafiky et al., 2025). On the other hand, rapid technological advancement is accompanied by an ethical crisis and moral degradation, where the spiritual relationship between teachers and students is eroded by instant digital culture (Fuadi & Azis, 2025; Putra et al., 2025).

There is even empirical data supporting the notion that student behavior patterns are changing, justifying the urgency of this issue. Many of the studies report a higher prevalence of cheating in online learning environments, as well as cyberbullying and reduced politeness when communicating with teachers through instant messaging apps. At times, there is a complete loss of boundaries as students interact in virtual spaces and think of teachers more like "customer service" rather than educators. This shows that civility is an educational, not a technical phenomenon and that digital technical competence alone is insufficient to create a civilized ecosystem. The rapid use of technology in education has also been linked to declining student discipline and academic integrity in several recent studies.

The issue of professionalism has officially responded in Indonesia through Law Number 14 of 2005 concerning Teachers and Lecturers, which lays the foundation for four pillars of

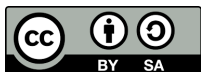
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competence: Pedagogical, Personal, Social, and Professional. This regulation is a great legal basis and had he been reviewing it critically, in several cases, was interpreted in a technocratic and administrative way (Asiah et al., 2024). Currently, the framework is very much a technical one; it is predominantly about teachers need to be able to do, yet arguably less so about *why*, *adab* (principles) for professional conduct with spiritual and ethical basis of the profession which originates from Islamic scholarship (Basith & Mubin, 2025). It is, thus, possible for a teacher to be declared administratively “competent” and yet lack the moral authority necessary of character formation.

To bridge the gap between technical professionalism and ethical spirituality, there is an urgent need to revitalize the concept of *adab al-mu'allim* (teacher's etiquette) from classical heritage (*turats*). The book *At-Tibyan Fii Adabi Hamalatil Qur'an* by Imam An-Nawawi offers authoritative guidance on the ethics of teachers. While previous scholars have examined *At-Tibyan* (Fauzi, 2024; Musyadad, 2021), there is a lack of comprehensive studies that systematically synthesize these classical values directly into the modern framework of the four national competencies.

Therefore, this study aims to perform a conceptual synthesis to map the overlap and relevance between the classical *adab* values from Imam An-Nawawi and the modern professional teacher competency framework in Indonesia. Specifically, this study addresses two main research problems: (1) How are the essential values of *adab mu'allim* conceptualized by Imam An-Nawawi in *At-Tibyan*? and (2) What is the relevance and conceptual synthesis between these values and the four pillars of teacher competence in Law No. 14 of 2005?

The main contribution of this paper is to offer a “Complete Teacher” paradigm that places the ethical-spiritual dimension as the foundation of technical competence. The remainder of this paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews the related work regarding the national competency standards and the *At-Tibyan* framework. In Section 3, we describe the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) method applied in this study. Section 4 discusses the results and examines the synthesis. Lastly, Section 6 presents the conclusions.

## 2. Literature Review

This section presents the theoretical framework used in this study, including: (1) Indonesian National Standards of Teacher Competences, and (2) Classical Islamic Ethics standpoint based on Imam An-Nawawi's references. This section also traces previous studies in this regard to find the literature gap (i.e., what is missing) for this systematic literature review.

### Teacher Competence Framework in Indonesia

Professionalism of teachers in Indonesia is regulated by Law no 14 years 2005 on Teachers and Lecturers. The regulation was to ensure quality of education at the national level, which also comes with certain eligibility criteria for teachers. Article 10 of this Law states that the competence person be a professional teacher is integrated into four competencies namely: Pedagogical, Personal, Social and Professional (Indonesia, 2005).

First, Pedagogical Competence to manage student learning processes. Within the 21st century, it encompasses designing curriculum, authentic assessment, and technology in learning (Arif et al., 2025; Rahman, 2025). Secondly, Personal Competence signifies a calm, composed, experienced, knowledgeable and authoritative musician. They may feel as though teachers are role models for students; they have to be of noble character. Recent critiques, however, confirm that this virtue proficiency is assessed administratively, not spiritually (Asiah et al., 2024).

Third, Social Competence is describes teachers persons who able to communicate and interact with student during learning process, management of the school to work together efficiently among fellow teachers and parent/general science parents student. Fourth, Professional Competence is vast and deep mastery of subject matter is the most essential topics in order to be able to guide students in achieving competency standards based on education national standard (Basith & Mubin, 2025).

Although these four pillars provide a solid structural backbone, scholars claim that implementation largely manifests as secular-administrative compliance. This has led to more attention on technical capabilities like digital literacy and lesson planning, with less focus put on the “soul” of education, or the ethical-spiritual axis, being downplayed in technically assessing these competencies (Rambe, 2023).

Moreover, how “Personal Competence” is implemented in teacher performance assessment instruments (PKG) tends to refer to document compliance such as attendance and criminal record rather than the substance of spiritual maturity. What is supposed to be easy for the state, quantitative measurement of “piety” or “authority,” becomes instead a matter of normative indicators. This leads a void that allows an educator to receive a perfect score in performance appraisal while having little life to their spiritual relationship with the students.

### **The Meaning of *Adab* in *At-Tibyan***

In addition to this rather modern regulatory framework, this study draws from *turats* literature especially the notion of *Adab* (etiquette/ethics). One of the most recognized references in this area is *At-Tibyan Fii Adabi Hamalatil Qur'an* by Imam Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Syaraf An-Nawawi (631-676 H). Although this book discusses etiquette for the bearers of Qur'an, but chapter four dedicated to the etiquette of *mu'allim* (teacher) and *muta'allim* (learner or student) which can be used in general Islamic education (Huda, 2020).

*At-Tibyan* occupies a special role in Islamic pedagogy literature. In contrast with the broader, philosophical nature of Al-Ghazali's *Ihya Ulumuddin*, *At-Tibyan* is practical and succinct where it must be, and aimed specifically at Qur'an bearers (and by extension teachers and educators). This was written in 13th century within a tumultuous political context, where An-Nawawi sought to safeguard the transmission of knowledge through strict ethical codes. He noted that the sanctity of knowledge is predicated upon the heart of its carrier. This premise is the exact opposite of how modern secularism views academia as unrelated from morals. According to An-Nawawi, a teacher is not just an educator or a disseminator of knowledge but a spiritual teacher.

According to An-Nawawi, the main virtue of teacher competence is based on purity of intention (*ikhlas*) and constant awareness in regard [to] God's supervision (*muraqabah*). The power of the teacher is not based on a certificate, but from their own *wara'* and *tawadhu'* (Nurudin, 2024). Moreover, An-Nawawi describes how a teacher should use *rifq* (gentleness) towards students and to treat them as one's own child, something which goes beyond the mere professionalism, client relationship in most contemporary education environments (Fauzi, 2024).

### **Related Studies and Research Gap**

While teacher competences and Islamic ethics have been well-researched previously in isolation different ways. Some studies concentrated on the competence aspect of digital-age teachers. For instance, Rafiky et al. The emergence of Society 5.0 era, (2025) and the current trend at a global level began to demand digital adaptability and digital literacy skills along with various other 21st-century skills (Bahri, 2023; Rafiky et al., 2025). In a detailed explanation, Tias and Yuliejantiningasih (2025) stated that digital literacy reinforces pedagogical capabilities (Tias & Yuliejantiningasih, 2025).

A separate category of studies emphasizes the moral erosion that takes place in education. Putra et al. (2025) revealed the decline of respect from students to teachers as well as a decline in character values due to an instant digital culture (Putra et al., 2025; Sakdiah & Matsum, 2025). These findings indicated an immediate challenge in the education process to restore moral values (Fuadi & Azis, 2025; Shodiqin & Fatimah, 2025).

In this respect, several scholars have analysed the content of the *At-Tibyan*. The general idea about teacher in *At-Tibyan* has been mapped, Musyadad (2021), and correlated with a personal competence (Fauzi, 2024; Musyadad, 2021). But a search of current literature (2015-2025) shows a lack of this kind of research. Several recent studies discuss *At-Tibyan*, but they tend to focus only on personal competence and do not integrate it with all four teacher competencies. So far, the lack of studies are presented to systematically synthesize classical values *Adab Mu'allim* in *At-Tibyan* “to fill the four-empty phase” fourth pillar modern competence (Pedagogical, Personal, Social and Professional) at once. Hence, this Systematic Literature Review (SLR) is intended to overcome the gap by providing a conceptual integration that revives the four pillars of national competence with the spiritual aspect of classical *Adab*.

### 3. Proposed Method

This research uses a qualitative type of research, with the approach used is Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology. The purpose is to articulate the synthesis of classical norms of Muslim ethics with contemporary professional skills. This protocol follows the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to maintain a rigorous, transparent, and replicable review process (Page et al., 2021).

#### Search Strategy and Data Sources

The data collection worked by collecting secondary academic literature published over the last decade (2015–2025). The search strategy employed Google Scholar as the principal database because it provides coverage of both international repositories and Indonesian national journal portals (Gusenbauer & Haddaway, 2020). However, in order to be thorough, Indonesia and English specific keywords were combined together with Boolean operators (“AND”, “OR”) to narrow the searches. Table 1 gives a summary of the actual search criteria.

**Table 1.** Keywords used for data collection.

Search Focus	Indonesian Keywords	English Keywords
Modern/Legal Framework	“Kompetensi Guru”, “Profesionalisme Guru”, “Kompetensi Abad 21”, “UU Nomor 14 Tahun 2005”	“Teacher Competence”, “Teacher Professionalism”, “21st Century Skills”
Classical/Ethical Framework	“Adab Guru”, “Kitab At-Tibyan”, “Adab Pengajar”	“Teacher ethics” OR “Islamic teacher”, “An-Nawawi perspective”
Synthesis & Methodology	“Sintesis” AND “Adab”, “Sintesis” AND “Kompetensi”, “Pemetaan Tematik”	“Literature Review” AND “Teacher Competence”, “Thematic Mapping”

#### Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To keep the focus and quality of the review, eligibility criteria were made strict. The inclusion criteria specified that the literature be: (1) published from 2015 to 2025; (2) specifically on *adab mu'allim* based on *At-Tibyan* or four pillars of teacher competence; (3) contextually linked to Islamic Religious Education/PAI in the Society 5.0 era; and (4) freely available in full-text.

On the other hand, studies were excluded if they considered both student etiquette (*adab muta'allim*) while waters primarily used other ethical book (such as *Ta'lim al-Muta'allim*), or involved in complex discussions on moral teacher competence without the national legal framework. To maintain academic rigor, non-systematic reviews and grey literature were also excluded.

#### Data Selection (PRISMA Flow)

The selection process was done through a multi-stage screening process. The database search initially produced a wide collection of documents on the basis of keywords. A screening phase where all titles and abstracts were reviewed for their relevance. These identified documents were then retrieved and assessed in full-text against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. The chosen dataset lastly contains 35 documents, including 27 journal articles, 4 final-life papers, 3 thesis dan 1 legal document (Law No. 14 of 2005).

#### Data Analysis Technique

The data sampled were analyzed through the Interactive Model from Miles, Huberman and Saldaña (Miles et al., 2014). In this analysis, three streams of activities ran concurrently. Initially, a Data Condensation process was conducted to select and concentrate the excerpt portion on selected parts of 4 competencies and text segments in *At-Tibyan*. Second, Data Display was used to condense this information into a matrix (see Results section) comparing these two frameworks in order to determine areas of convergence. Lastly, Conclusion Drawing was carried out and the “Complete Teacher” paradigm constructed and Matched with secondary literature for triangulation purposes.

### 4. Results and Discussion

The analysis of 35 selected documents systematically illustrates the existence of considerable conceptual overlap between contemporary competency standards and classical Islamic ethics. Through data condensation, this study determined that according to Law NO.

14 of 2005 gives the framework professionalism and the *At-Tibyan* by Imam An-Nawawi provide the spirit (soul) to enliven these structures.

### The Conceptual Synthesis

The main output of this study is a counter conceptual map integrating the four quadrants of teacher competence and the values of *Adab Mu'allim*. Provided in Table 2, this synthesis illustrates classical values filling the “spiritual void” common in administrative competency interpretations.

**Table 2.** Matrix of synthesis between Law No. 14 of 2005 and *At-Tibyan*.

Competency Pillar	Perspective of Law No. 14/2005 (Modern/Legal)	Perspective of <i>At-Tibyan</i> (Classical/Ethical)	Synthesis (Value Overlap)
<b>Personal Competence</b>	A personality that is stable, mature, wise, authoritative, and noble in character.	1. <i>Ikhlās</i> (Sincerity for God) and <i>Muraqabah</i> (God-consciousness). 2. <i>Tawadhu</i> (Humility) and avoiding arrogance. 3. <i>Nadzahafah</i> (Physical Cleanliness).	<b>Spiritual Integrity:</b> Teacher authority is not solely derived from psychological maturity, but from heart purity ( <i>tazkiyatun nafs</i> ) and a transcendental orientation reflected in both inner character and outer appearance.
<b>Social Competence</b>	The ability to communicate and interact effectively with students, colleagues, and the community.	1. <i>Rifq</i> (Gentleness/Affection). 2. <i>Nasibhat</i> (Sincere Advice). 3. Respecting experts and guarding one's tongue.	<b>Prophetic Communication:</b> The teacher-student bond is elevated from a professional transaction to a spiritual relationship based on love ( <i>mahabbah</i> ) and sincere guidance, transcending mere knowledge transfer.
<b>Professional &amp; Pedagogical Competence</b>	Mastery of subject matter broadly and deeply; Ability to manage learning and curriculum.	1. <i>Itqan</i> (Mastery/Validity of knowledge chain). 2. <i>Murojaah</i> (Discipline in reviewing knowledge). 3. <i>Hirshu</i> (High Spirit/Enthusiasm).	<b>Authoritative Lifelong Learner:</b> Professionalism is defined by the validity of knowledge ( <i>sanad</i> ), a tireless spirit of learning, and a high work ethic in maintaining the quality of knowledge delivery.

### Spiritual Integrity as the Foundation of Personal Competence

Law No 14 of 2005 specifically requires teachers to have “a noble character” and be “authoritative. Today, this is mostly understood as psychological stability and conformity to the code of conduct at work. But with the *At-Tibyan* point of view, they explain deeper by saying that *Ikhlās* (Sincerity) and *Muraqabah* (feeling watched by Allah) are on which personality is built. Further, Imam An-Nawawi insists that a teacher should purify their heart of worldly aims like doing it for status or monetary gain.

This finding is in accordance with Fauzi (2024) who elaborated that *tawadhu* concept by An-Nawawi as a core of modern education, an arrogant teacher even he/she is exceptionally professional will never be a good model. And the synthesis also shows that authority is visual. An-Nawawi stresses *Nadzahafah* (physical cleanliness) and tidy dress. In the modern world, that is analogous to “professional grooming.” A teacher that looks clean (in clothes, bodies) and smells fragrant naturally radiates authority and earns respect (Fauzi, 2024).

The implication of this synthesis is paramount in terms of teacher performance. Research by Mukarromah et al. (2025) conclude that the more mature personal competence a teacher has, the better their performance will be because teachers who can control their emotions both in and out of school activities are able to create an optimal learning environment (Mukarromah et al., 2025). Moreover, according to Latuapo (2023), the personal competence of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) teacher can shape students' character too

(Latuapo, 2023). Thus, if you act in your education, internalize *ikhlās* and *tawadhu* values as the foundation of a comprehensive problem solution to the teacher role model crisis in this digital era.

*Muraqabah* holds particular significance in the context of online learning. In the absence of direct physical supervision between teachers and students through screens, academic integrity is significantly dependent on *Muraqabah*. A teacher who grasps this value will not only teach honestly but also instills self-supervision in students. Thus, in conducting online examinations, a teacher exercising spiritual authority would not simply depend on proctoring software to prevent cheating but would cultivate an environment of honesty anchored on the understanding that God is watching. This spiritual authority is what makes a “Great Teacher” different than just being a “Facilitator”

### **Humanist-Prophetic Pedagogy in Social Competence**

The Law calls for effective and responsive communication, but *At-Tibyan* takes social competence a step further by emphasizing upper levels of *Rifq* (gentleness) and *Nasihah* (advice). A teacher is supposed to love and cherish students like “their own children,” as Imam An-Nawawi has taught. This turns the paradigm upside down from a strict “teacher-student” hierarchy to that of a “parent-child” spiritual connection.

This synthesis fills the gap identified by Ghazali and Hidayati (2025) who stressed that social competence must be founded upon Islamic values such as inclusiveness and tolerance (Ghazali & Hidayati, 2025). Recognizing who is missing, and asking how they are doing as in keeping with the idea to promote a sense of social concern which always often lack in the large-scale reference class modern classrooms (Musyadad, 2021). An-Nawawi commands for teachers. Furthermore social *adab* in *At-Tibyan* includes the concept of treating fellow learned people respectfully, where a person will guard his tongue which pains others. This reinforces the requirement for really good connection with the Law, but strengthens it by combining humanity and a sense of spiritual responsibility. *Rifq* helps teachers bridge the emotional distance imposed by remote learning environments.

The notion of *Rifq* is the remedy to the pervasive “toxic” culture we see in online interactions. Social media inspires reactions, and most communication is harsh, condemning and reactive. Digital interactions (WhatsApp groups, LMS forums) make teachers who practice *Rifq* the antonym of cyberbullying. The lesson that An-Nawawi told us to apply within our tongues is done today on the finger of our hands before typing. Teachers help students to become civil digital citizens by modeling polite, patient, and empathetic communication in their digital writing. In digital learning environments, teachers play an important role in maintaining respectful and constructive communication with students.

### **Professional Mastery through *Itqan* and *Hirshu***

The national standard defines Professional and Pedagogical Competencies based on mastery of material and learning management. This is complemented by *Itqan* (thoroughness/mastery) and *Hirshu* (high spirit), completing the *At-Tibyan*. *Itqan* in the classical sense mandates teachers not only be well versed in their subject, but that they possess an authoritative *sanad* (chain of transmission) as teacher. This, in the current context, translates into both verified subject matter expertise and profound epistemological understanding to avoid mere presentation of generalised information which is otherwise so abundant on the Internet.

In addition, it called for *Hirshu* (enthusiasm) and *Murojaah* (the discipline of reviewing knowledge) according to An-Nawawi. This dovetails nicely into the modern idea of being a Lifelong Learner. Professional teacher does not mean just possessing a teaching credential but consistently reflecting on and improving their knowledge base based on high work ethic. Rafiky et al. This spiritual spirit in professional competence become a urgency to overcome Society 5.0 challenges (Mu'arif, 2023; Rafiky et al., 2025).

Meanwhile, Mahmud et al. Research by (2020) stated that teachers who appear on time and energetic will provide the same enthusiasm to their students. It tests that professionalism in Islam requires more than intellectual intelligence but also physical stamina and time discipline (Mahmud et al., 2020). If it were not for *Hirshu*, teachers will become obsolete with technology but if it is not *Itqan*, they may teach people without knowing what to learn. So, the combination of these two sets forms a tech-savvy and scientifically dominant teacher.

In the post-truth era, until now, perhaps the best weapon against the wave of hoaxes and pseudoscience is to promote *Itqan* & *Sanad*. According to the teachings of Islam, knowledge must be sourced and valid. Teachers synthesize into professional competence that of Validators of Knowledge. They should not present unverified information in class. They

instill the ability to analyze (read between the lines) and search for sources (*tabayyun*) before subscribing into news. Hence, the traditional medium of *Sanad* will transform into modern information literacy to guarantee that the knowledge transmitted is held accountable scientifically and ethically.

### Challenges and Strategic Implementation

The synthesis of the *At-Tibyan* values and national laws represent a strong perfect model, but is still not without problems for its practical application. Number one: the administrative burden on teachers. Teachers also have many administrative documents to fill out in order to get certified or promoted, and the time they have left is often spent not on self-reflection (*mubasabah*) or nurturing strong emotional ties with students. Such a system makes teachers concentrate on clues about “what is written” and not on “what is felt.”

This brings us to the second issue of the dichotomy of the curriculum. In numerous establishments, character training and educational programs are approached uncompromisingly. *Adab* can be thought of as a burden on religious teachers only whereas science or math teachers confer with cognitive targets. This is contrary to An-Nawawi’s pedagogy as a whole.

Many strategies can thus be suggested in order to tackle these challenges:

1. Change the way we assess teachers Policy-makers should operate a two track system whereby teacher performance appraisals will be based on peer-review and student feedback rather than administrative documents, thus capturing elements of personality and social competence that are invisible to administrative documents.
2. Incorporated Professional Development: PPGs should set aside content for pedagogical techniques and technology yet do not dismiss nor leave out intensive modules on *tazkiyatun nafs* (soul purification) and professional ethics based from *turats*.
3. Role Modeling by Leadership: These values must be modeled first by the school principals. *Adab* is something which is passed on through companionship (*suhbah*) and example, as An-Nawawi emphasises; it can not simply be imparted by instruction.

Recognizing these challenges and laying out tangible strategies makes the discussion of the Complete Teacher a realistic target in Indonesian schools rather than utopian discourse.

## 5. Conclusions

The study has succeeded in compiling the concept of *adab mu'allim* presented in *At-Tibyan* with the four pillars of professional teacher competence according to Law No. 14 of 2005. This indicates that classical Islamic ethics are an essential part of the modern law legislation. In particular, this synthesis contributes three dimensions: (1) Personal Competence based on *Ikhlas* and *Muraqabah* makes psychological stability a spiritual integrity; (2) Social Competence affirmed by *Rifq* and *Nashibat* enhances the professional communication as the humanist-prophetic bonding; and (3) Professional but pedagogical Competence confirmed by *Itqan* and *Hirshu* reinforces teacher as an expert lifetime learner.

These findings suggest that teacher professional development should not focus solely on administrative compliance-related approaches but employ ethical-spiritual cultivation. An effective teacher in the digital era is not only expected to integrate technological competence with ethical awareness, but also to adapt these principles within specific educational contexts, which may vary significantly across institutions.

However, this study has limitations. That the findings are conceptual and theoretical is due to the fact that it is a systematic literature review. However, this synthesis has not yet been empirically demonstrated in a live classroom setting. Based on these results, further researches are suggested to do a field research or activity research to obtain the empirical test of *At Tibyan* values which should be internalized. In particular, researchers can create a new “Islamic Teacher Competency Index” that measures or operationalizes An-Nawawi’s variables into indicators. In addition, comparative work to other classical works of pedagogy would expand the field of character-oriented teacher training.

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